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between the termini has been suggested. It is, however, hardly necessary upon the present occasion for me to discuss the feasibility of this or other proposed expedients to the same end; but, in view of the circumstances and exigencies of the times, both without and within the Australian colonies, in reference to the necessity for means of more prompt communication between Australia and the United Kingdom, it can but be universally admitted that the Gulf extension should be carried out with the least possible delay."

2. *Exploration of the Mouths of the Flinders River, Gulf of Carpentaria.*
Extracts from a Report of Mr. W. LANDSBOROUGH to the Governor of Queensland.

(Communicated by the COLONIAL OFFICE.)

Burketown, Gulf of Carpentaria, 9th February, 1867.

For some time past the settlers on the Flinders River have been most anxious to have the inlets examined to the eastward of the Albert River, in the hope of finding a more conveniently-situated place for the shipment of their produce than Cleveland Bay and this port, to which places they have to send it at present. Last month an opportunity occurred of examining Morning Inlet, through the kindness of Captain Ellis, master of the schooner *Lily*. With Captain Stokes' admirable work in a person's hands, and the chart of the coast, it is a very easy matter to find any of the inlets by coasting in a small boat along the shores of the Gulf; but with a vessel of considerable draught it is not so easy, as the shallowness of the water all along the coast renders it necessary to keep so far off the land that it is difficult to distinguish the openings. Captain Ellis, however, skilfully succeeded in finding, by moonlight, Morning Inlet, on the 23rd of January.

Leaving the *Lily*, Mr. Phillips and myself went to the inlet in the pilot-boat, and, after examining it we felt doubtful that this was the inlet we were in quest of, as we could not discover any promontory corresponding with Middle Point of Captain Stokes, so we returned to the *Lily*. Afterwards, we got Captain Ellis to coast to the eastward sufficiently far to decide that if the inlet we had been at was not Morning Inlet, that Morning Inlet must be to the westward, so we then got him to put the ship about, and sail in that direction. It now became my intention to take to the small boat, with the object of more particularly examining the coast; and having arranged with Captain Ellis to meet him, after the survey, either off Gore Point or the Albert, we started. Coasting near the land from Gore Point eastward, we were quite satisfied, on our arrival, in the afternoon, at the inlet we had been at previously, notwithstanding the discrepancy I have mentioned respecting Middle Point, that it was Morning Inlet. Middle Point is very low, with mangroves, and it is not improbable that the missing part may have been washed away since it was surveyed by Captain Stokes. We got into Morning Inlet about 4.45 P.M. Our progress was so rapid, owing to the tide being in our favour and the straightness of the various reaches of the river, that before midnight we reached latitude 18°, a point further south than any boat had previously reached in any other river of Carpentaria. The place we reached is midway between the Leichhardt and Flinders rivers, and about 70 miles east of the Albert Settlement. The river is narrow, but were it required as an outlet it would be adapted for vessels of a small draught of water not exceeding 6 feet, and could be navigated within 10 miles of the point we reached with the pilot-boat. Like all the rivers of Carpentaria, its banks are low, where the difficulties of navigation are few; but as you approach higher up, where good situations for townships present themselves, the river becomes more impeded by shoals and other

obstacles. Some settlers whom we met agreed that the Norman River, which they said was situated 15 miles to the eastward of the Flinders, was apparently superior to Morning Inlet.

Late in the afternoon we left Morning Inlet in search of the *Lily*, and anchored near Gore Point. Next morning we pulled to the *Lily*, which was about 10 miles to the westward, and informed Captain Ellis of the arrangements we had made. Captain Ellis, after giving us what provisions he could spare, sailed to Sweer's Island, and we left to go in an almost opposite direction to Bynoe Inlet. In the evening, as the weather was squally, we were exceedingly glad to get safely into an inlet named Ell Creek by the settlers. Ell Creek is the first of any consequence to the west of the Flinders, in the direction of Morning Inlet, that is easily distinguishable from the offing to the westward of the Flinders. We were detained there in consequence of squally weather until late in the afternoon of the following day, and during our stay went, in search of water, inland to the westward. The country consists of fine grassy plains, intersected with mud flats, and is as fine pastoral country as any that I have ever seen in Queensland so near the seaboard. After leaving Ell Creek we sailed to the Flinders, and took shelter for the night. The entrance to the Flinders merits the favourable description given of it by Captain Stokes, and is easily distinguishable from the sandy beach on the east side of the river, mangroves being generally the prevailing feature elsewhere.

Proceeding to the Bynoe, which we then supposed was the Norman of the settlers, situated 10 miles eastward from the Flinders' entrance, we were much pleased to find the soundings most satisfactory, and coinciding with the description of Captain Stokes, its discoverer, who found the depth of water at the entrance to be as great as that of any other river of Carpentaria, but time did not admit of his surveying it above a few miles. Further up the river, for a long distance beyond where it was previously surveyed, we found no rocky bars, and a depth of from 2 to 6 fathoms; but in consequence of having no water we were obliged to push up the river at night, and could only take soundings. The survey of the river Mr. Phillips left for the passage down, and the second evening we were nearly as far up as the boat could go, and the water drinkable. A walk on the following day, of nearly 2 miles, along the bank of the river, brought us to where the land party had crossed, and in the evening we shifted the boat to the crossing-place, where we remained two days, in the expectation of the land party finding us. At the expiration of that time Mr. Phillips and myself resolved to go in search of Messrs. Smith and Company's station for a supply of rations, of which we had run short. I had been led to suppose that Smith's station was 6 miles up the Flinders from where it was navigable, and I supposed that I could make the station in about 15 miles. When we had reached 2 miles we came upon a large salt-water river, and when we had traced it some distance to the northward we concluded it was the Flinders. Next day we went up the river without finding any recent traces of stock, which gave us but little prospect of finding Smith's station. The following day, having given up the idea of finding Smith's, we followed the river up, intending to make Mr. Halloran's station, and came to a single dray-track which led us to it early on the morning of the third day. The country we traversed was excellent, and the sheep at Mr. Halloran's, by their fine condition, testified to its being well adapted for pastoral purposes. From Mr. Halloran we learned that Mr. Smith's station was situated on Armstrong Creek, a western tributary of the Flinders.

The Bynoe we found was the main branch of the Flinders, and discovered that these rivers separated from the one channel, at a point about 5 miles above where we reached with the boat. The settlers had mistaken the Bynoe for the Flinders in consequence of its being the main branch. The country is excellent for pastoral purposes, and has fine, dry, hard ridges, presenting good

sites for building. At 2 miles below the boat these fine ridges lie close to the river, and about 2 miles below the lagoons there is a range at least 200 feet high, which, from the information I gathered from the settlers, extends to the Norman, about 15 miles.

I cannot conclude without again expressing my firm belief—strengthened by the experience I have lately gained—that Carpentaria country must become a territory of the greatest importance, owing to the vast extent of fine available country which has proved itself singularly well adapted for sheep and cattle.

3. *Great Volcanic Eruption in Iceland, in August, 1867.* Extract of a Letter from Dr. HJALTELM to J. W. EVANS, Esq.

(Communicated by Sir R. I. MURCHISON, Bart., President.)

AT the end of August a most remarkable volcanic eruption took place in our island. Its story runs shortly thus :—

On the 29th of August, by somewhat misty weather, but tolerably hot, the temperature being about 13° of Celsius (55° 40' Fahr.), a tremendous sulphureous odour was found all over our little town. The barometer was about 29·4, and very little wind blew from the s.e. I immediately supposed that an eruption might be going on in the east volcanoes; and the next day showed that my prediction was quite right. In the evening heavy shots were heard beneath the mountain Esja, and a rolling, like thunder, was heard underground. On the 30th August, by clear weather, and a small breeze from the s.e., the same odour was felt all over the southern part of our country, and in the evening, at about 7 o'clock, a heavy fire was seen in s.e. to e. direction from hence. It was a white blue flame, like burning sulphur, and this lasted all night, and could be seen more than 100 miles out at sea. Lightning and rolling thunder were also heard in all our mountainous regions, but no earthquake was felt, neither here in Reykjavik nor in the mountainous regions, so far as we know. At the same time as the eruption, with its tremendous flame, was seen here in our town, it was also seen in the northern part of our island; and seen from Myvatn it was directly in a south direction. A merchant vessel sailing at that time south of Portland saw the eruption in a north direction; and in the South Skaptafells Sysla grey white ashes fell on the grass. This remarkable eruption lasted only for three days, viz., the 29th, 30th, and 31st of August, but after that time only a whitish-grey cloud was seen in the same direction.

In the beginning we were here at a loss to find out the exact place of this tremendous but very curious eruption. Seen from hence it might be very near Stekla or Kandakampa, an old volcano which in former days, in 1449, poured out a very destructive lava-field; but it was by travellers soon found out that it could be in neither of those places. Now all people from the east part of this country agree in the opinion that this eruption must have been on the north side of Skáptár Jókull, and the same opinion is held by people coming from the north.

To tell the truth, this volcanic eruption was one of the most curious ones we have heard of. Its sudden appearance, without any earthquake, its enormous flames, which overlooked all the high mountains, its accompanying strong sulphureous odour, which was perceived, as far as we know, all over the island, make it one of the most extraordinary volcanic phenomena I have heard of. I was only able to collect some few grains of the small quantity of ashes which fell on the ground, and found it consisting of a little pumice-dust